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December 29, 2004

**ROCKFORD RESIDENT PLEADS GUILTY
TO ILLEGALLY POSSESSING A FIREARM**

ROCKFORD -- PATRICK J. FITZGERALD, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois; ANDREW L. TRAVER, Special Agent-In-Charge of the Chicago Office of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF); PAUL A. LOGLI, Winnebago County State's Attorney; and STEVEN PUGH, Rockford Police Chief, today made the following announcement:

United States District Judge Philip G. Reinhard today sentenced **COREY L. SYKES**, 27 (DOB: 10/18/1977), formerly of 1004 Island Avenue, Rockford, Illinois, to 72 months in federal prison without parole for being a felon in possession of a firearm. He also was sentenced to three years of supervised release following his release from prison and to pay a \$100 fine. LATOYA S. HORTON, 22 (DOB: 4/2/1982), 1996 Davis Drive, Rockford, Illinois, and MONICA D. BOX, 23 (DOB: 11/25/1980), 707 Cunningham #F, Rockford, Illinois, have also pleaded guilty to aiding and abetting Sykes in the offense. Box will be sentenced on January 14, 2005 and Horton will be sentenced on February 3, 2005.

At the time of his guilty plea on October 27, 2004, Sykes admitted that on April 30, 2004, he and Horton went to a firearms dealer in Cherry Valley ("the Store"), to select a handgun to purchase. As a convicted felon, Sykes did not have a Firearm Owners Identification ("FOID") card and was prohibited from possessing a firearm. Sykes admitted in the plea agreement to directing Horton, who had a FOID card, to look at a Hi-Point .40 caliber pistol. According to the plea agreement, Sykes and Horton left the Store as they knew Horton would not be allowed to purchase the pistol because the required, pre-sale telephone inquiry through the Illinois State Police Firearms Transfer Inquiry Program would have revealed that Horton's FOID card had been revoked.

Sykes admitted that on the evening of April 30, 2004, he obtained \$170 from Horton to purchase the pistol. According to the plea agreement, Sykes and Box went to the Store where Sykes handed Box \$200 in cash and directed her to purchase the Hi Point JCP .40 caliber pistol. According to the plea agreement, Sykes and Box left the store without the pistol because of the mandatory 72-hours waiting period imposed after the purchase of a firearm before a purchaser is permitted to take possession of firearm.

On the afternoon of May 5, 2004, the plea agreement stated, Horton drove Sykes and Box to the Store to pick up the pistol. Box entered the Store alone while Sykes and Horton waited outside in the parking lot. Sykes admitted in the plea agreement that when Box returned to the vehicle with the pistol, he directed Box to give him the handgun. Sykes began removing the pistol from the box as Horton drove away from the Store's parking lot. Law enforcement agents stopped the vehicle shortly after it left the parking lot and recovered the pistol.

Sykes was charged under tough federal firearms laws as part of the Project Safe Neighborhoods program. Project Safe Neighborhoods is an intensive, cooperative effort between local, state, and federal law enforcement to attack gun crimes. Additional information about Project Safe Neighborhoods may be found at www.psn.gov.

The Rockford Office of the ATF and the Rockford Police Department investigated this case. It is being prosecuted in federal court by Assistant United States Attorney Joseph C. Pedersen.

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